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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [MU](#)
SUBJECT: OMANIS STRONGLY CONDEMN ATTACKS AGAINST GAZA
REF: MUSCAT 877

Classified By: DCM L. Victor Hurtado for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) Summary: As it prepared to host the GCC Summit, the Omani government strongly condemned recent Israeli military strikes in Gaza. Reflecting widespread public anger over the attacks, peaceful demonstrations against Israel took place in Muscat and the southern city of Salalah. Events in Gaza will ensure that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, already expected to be a topic of discussion by GCC leaders, will assume even greater prominence at the Summit. End Summary.

¶2. (U) In a public statement on December 28 on behalf of the Omani government, Deputy Prime Minister Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al-Sa'id harshly criticized recent Israeli military operations in Gaza. "We condemn the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and the excessive use of force by Israel instead of resolving outstanding issues by adopting amicable methods," the Deputy PM declared. The Majlis al-Shura, the directly elected lower house of Oman's proto-legislature, issued a similar statement denouncing the "brutal massacres" committed by Israelis against Palestinians in Gaza. The Majlis further called for the international community to exert pressure on Israel to cease its attacks and urged the Palestinian people to "return to a status of national unity."

¶3. (C) The military strikes in Gaza and resulting civilian deaths dominated on-line discussions in local internet fora with participants expressing great anger against Israel. Many individuals also blasted Egypt for alleged complicity in the Israeli raids. Reflecting this widespread public sentiment, a few peaceful demonstrations were held in Oman on December 28 to condemn Israel. The largest demonstration took place in the southern port city of Salalah and consisted of over 100 individuals. In Muscat, about 75 persons gathered outside the Ministry of Housing to protest against Israel for about one hour before dispersing. The media reported that a small demonstration also was held in the town of Dhank in the Omani interior. (Note: These demonstrations would not have taken place without at least tacit government approval. End Note.)

¶4. (C) Events in Gaza have ensured that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, already expected to be a subject of discussion at the GCC Summit (reftel), will assume greater prominence during the event. The situation in Gaza was reportedly the focus of a six-hour meeting of GCC foreign ministers in Muscat on December 28 to help finalize the Summit agenda. After chairing the meeting, Omani Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusef bin Alawi told reporters that he and his colleagues had "reviewed the grave situation in Gaza" and had "formulated certain visions ... to assist the Palestinian people, lift the siege (of Gaza) and put an end to the atrocities."

¶5. (C) Comment: The Israeli attacks in Gaza come at an awkward time for Oman as it receives the GCC heads of state in Muscat. As host of the annual GCC gathering, the government will have to appear to take a strong stance

against Israeli actions while at the same attempting to prevent the subject from darkening the atmosphere of its carefully orchestrated Summit or detracting too much from other issues. Additional public demonstrations against Israel make take place in the coming days, most likely after the Summit, but the government will continue to make sure that these are peaceful and orderly and pose no potential threat to post personnel or operations. End Comment.
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